

We're all fat thanks to Sam's

Give me the Nobel Prize. I have figured out the reason America is the most obese country on the planet.

Two words - Sam's Club.

The membership-only mega-retailer forces normally rational folks to over eat on a regular basis - no matter whether they want to.

Case in point: I love 'everything' bagels. They are the bagels that have onions, garlic and poppy seeds. Got hooked on them when I was a prostitute for corporate America a number of years ago.

But, I digress.

Here's the deal: Sam's Club 'everything' bagels are two for \$3.68 - a bargain, I must admit.

But, there is a catch. One must purchase two bags of bagels. You can't split the difference.

I was in Sam's a few weeks ago and didn't want two bags of bagels. I wanted a single bag of six bagels.

"You have to buy two bags," was the clerk's first response.

"That's OK, I'll just pay a higher price."

"No, we cannot sell you just one bag of bagels," came his response.

"So, let me get this right, I can't buy a single bag of bagels - I have to buy two bags, regardless?"

"That is right."

At which point I offered to pay the kid \$3 for the single bag of bagels.

Then, it was \$3.68 for the bagels - the same price as two bags.

"You don't understand, sir, I physically cannot sell you a single bag of bagels."

"OK, Skippy, I'll tell you what, let's pretend that I bought two bags of bagels, but I'm only leaving with one bag."

"You can't do that, it will throw off our inventory and we have a deal with the supplier that we will only sell the bagels two bags at a time."

This had now moved from a friendly shopping experience to a quest for a single bag of bagels.

In case you're wondering, although I do really enjoy the 'everything' bagels, I hate them when

off the RECORD

r. michael johnson
editor/publisher



they are stale. And, if I bought two bags of bagels, they would go stale before I could eat them.

So, while I was willing to pay the full price for a single bag - it would be foolish to waste the extra food.

When I was in school, the nuns would always admon-

ish us if we wasted food.

"There are starving pigmy babies in Africa and you are throwing away food," could be heard daily in the cafeteria.

I guess that just stuck with me.

So, here I am, a consumer with cash in hand, offering the merchant the opportunity to double his profit by charging me for two bags of bagels and me only taking one with me.

But, the cashier dude - who appeared to be a chromosome or two shy - just would not budge.

Finally, I relented and purchased the two bags of bagels - which is when I discovered something else about Sam's Club.

They don't like it very well when the general public sets up at one of their little sample stands and starts handing out food in an 'unauthorized manner.'

I was practicing sanitary procedures - even wearing plastic gloves and a head covering. But they thought it was wholly inappropriate for me to be giving away bagel samples to passersby.

I guess it was my sales pitch that probably did me in:

"These are great bagels, but they will force feed you two bags - I hope you're hungry."

At one point I was advised that if I did not cease and desist my philanthropic endeavor, they would call the Bloomington Police.

At that point, I decided it was time to leave the store - with only one bag of bagels.

Sometimes it really is all about winning.

(R. Michael Johnson is Editor and Publisher of the Bloomfield Free Press and writes Off the Record as a weekly Opinion Page Feature.)